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8-23-2013

## Black Heritage Stamp Series: Althea Gibson

United States Postal Service. Stamp Division

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Footer logo

**Issue Date**  
August 23, 2013

**Engraver**  
Trident

**First Day City**  
Flushing, NY

**Colors**  
Cyan, Magenta, Yellow,  
Black

**Artist**  
Kadir Nelson  
Los Angeles, CA

**Image Area (w x h)**  
0.84 x 1.42 in.  
21.34 x 36.07 mm

**Designer**  
Derry Noyes  
Washington, DC

**Format**  
Pane of 20 (1 design)

**Art Director**  
Derry Noyes

**Plate Numbers**  
"V" followed by four  
single digits

**Typographer**  
Derry Noyes

**Marginal Markings**  
Header:  
"BLACK HERITAGE"  
"36th IN A SERIES" •  
© 2013 USPS, plate  
numbers, USPS logo,  
plate position diagram,  
barcodes, descriptive  
text, promotional text

**Modeler**  
Avery Dennison,  
Designed and  
Engineered Solutions  
(AVR/DES)

**Manufacturing Process**  
Gravure

**Printer**  
Avery Dennison (AVR)

## Althea Gibson

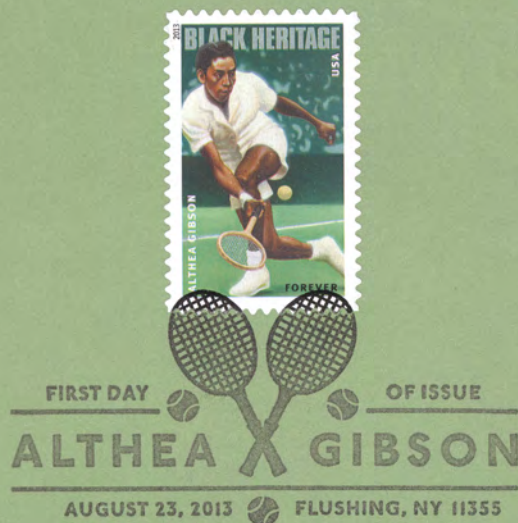
The 36th stamp in the Black Heritage series honors Althea Gibson (1927–2003), a pioneering tennis star who became the first black Wimbledon champion. The tall, lean Gibson was fast, had a long reach, and relied on a booming serve and precise volleys. She blazed a trail for a future generation of African-American players, such as Arthur Ashe and sisters Venus and Serena Williams.

Gibson got her first real shot at the big time in 1950. Perhaps spurred on by an *American Lawn Tennis* editorial written by former tennis champ Alice Marble—an ardent Gibson backer and supporter of equal rights—the United States Lawn Tennis Association (USLTA) accepted Gibson's application to play in that summer's United States Championships (now known as the U.S. Open) in Forest Hills, New York. Gibson, the first African American ever to enter that tournament, advanced to the second round. In 1951, she once again made history, becoming the first black player to enter Wimbledon.

In 1956, Gibson captured the French Championships (now known as the French Open) in Paris and became the first African American of either gender to win one of the four major singles tournaments. Gibson also teamed up with Angela Buxton to win the doubles crown. Gibson achieved perhaps the most famous victory of her career on July 6, 1957, prevailing in the Wimbledon final in straight sets.

Gibson, the Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year in both 1957 and 1958, had become the top-ranked player in the world. In 1958, she successfully defended her titles both at Wimbledon and at the U.S. Championships. She turned professional soon after, ending her amateur career with five major singles titles and six major doubles titles. In 1971, Gibson was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

"I know I've managed to be somebody," Gibson wrote in her autobiography. "That's what I always wanted. I'm Althea Gibson, the tennis champion."





# Althea Gibson



THE 36TH STAMP IN THE BLACK HERITAGE series honors Althea Gibson (1927–2003), a pioneering tennis star and the first black player to become a Wimbledon champion. Gibson blazed a trail for a future generation of African-American players, such as Arthur Ashe and sisters Venus and Serena Williams.

In 1956, Gibson captured the French Championships (now known as the French Open) in Paris and became the first African American of either gender to win one of the four major singles tournaments. She achieved perhaps the most famous victory of her career on July 6, 1957, prevailing in the Wimbledon final in straight sets. Afterward, Gibson shouted, "At last! At last!" During the trophy ceremony, she was greeted by Queen Elizabeth II. When Gibson returned to New York, the city threw her a ticker-tape parade. The good times continued that summer. In August, she appeared on the cover of *TIME* magazine.

Gibson, the Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year in both 1957 and 1958, had become the top-ranked player in the world. In 1958, she successfully defended her titles both at Wimbledon and at the U.S. Championships (now known as the U.S. Open).

"I know I've managed to be somebody," Gibson wrote in her autobiography. "That's what I always wanted. I'm Althea Gibson, the tennis champion."

The stamp features an oil-on-wood painting of Gibson by artist Kadir Nelson. The art is based on a photograph—taken at Wimbledon—of the tall and lean Gibson bending down to hit a low volley. By capturing her in action, Nelson emphasized Gibson's extraordinary grace and athleticism.



Intaglio: Fotosearch Stock Photography; background and right, bottom: © Bettmann/Corbis/AP Images; right, top: Associated Press

Stamps printed by Avery Dennison (AVR)/No. 922 in a series/August 23, 2013/Printed in U.S.A./© 2013 United States Postal Service



The first black tennis player to win one of the four major singles tournaments, Althea Gibson (1927–2003) helped integrate her sport at the height of the civil rights movement. She twice won Wimbledon and the U.S. Championships (now known as the U.S. Open) and became the top-ranked player in the world. Tall and lean, Gibson attacked relentlessly on the court. She was fast, had a long reach, and relied on a booming serve and precise volleys.

Gibson won the French Championships (now known as the French Open) in 1956, becoming the first black player to capture a major singles crown. She earned another landmark victory in July 1957, prevailing in the Wimbledon final in straight sets. Afterward, Gibson shouted, “At last! At last!” and was greeted by Queen Elizabeth II.

That September, she cruised to victory in the final of the U.S. Championships to win the tournament for the first time. In 1958, Gibson successfully defended her titles at Wimbledon and at the U.S. Championships. She retired from amateur tennis soon after, ending her career with five major singles titles and six major doubles titles.

“I know I’ve managed to be somebody,” she wrote in her autobiography. “That’s what I always wanted. I’m Althea Gibson, the tennis champion.”

PLATE  
POSITION







# ALTHEA GIBSON

## FIRST-DAY-OF-ISSUE STAMP CEREMONY

Court of Champions  
USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center – Flushing, NY

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 2013 ■ 10 A.M.**



### MASTER OF CEREMONIES

**Katrina Adams**

*First Vice President, United States Tennis Association*

### OFFICIAL STAMP DEDICATION

**William Campbell**

*Judicial Officer, United States Postal Service*

### REMARKS

**Billie Jean King**

*Sports Icon and Humanitarian*

**Chanda Rubin**

*Director at Large, United States Tennis Association*

### CLOSING

**Katrina Adams**

### HONORED GUESTS

**Lillian Chisholm • Rosemarie Darben  
Francine Gray**



# ALTHEA GIBSON

## COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

The 36th stamp in the Black Heritage series honors Althea Gibson (1927–2003), a pioneering tennis player who became the first black Wimbledon champion. The tall, lean Gibson was fast, had a long reach, and relied on a booming serve and precise volleys. She blazed a trail for a future generation of African-American players, such as Arthur Ashe and sisters Venus and Serena Williams.

The oil-on-wood painting featured on the stamp is based on a photograph—taken at Wimbledon—of Gibson bending down to hit a low volley. The first black tennis player to win one of the four major singles tournaments, Gibson helped integrate her sport at the height of the civil rights movement. She twice won Wimbledon and the U.S. Championships (now known as the U.S. Open) and became the top-ranked player in the world.

Designed by Derry Noyes, the stamp features the artwork of Kadir Nelson.

The Althea Gibson stamp is being issued as a Forever® stamp in self-adhesive sheets of 20. Forever stamps are always equal in value to the current First-Class Mail® one-ounce price.





**FIRST-DAY-OF-ISSUE**  
**CEREMONY**

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



FIRST DAY

OF ISSUE

**ALTHEA X GIBSON**

AUGUST 23, 2013 FLUSHING, NY 11355

*Celebrate the  
Art of Stamps*

